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The EU faces constant challenges to its internal security. Security threats such as terrorism, organised crime, cybercrime, the drugs trade or violent radicalisation are increasingly cross-border, interconnected and digital. The pandemic has exacerbated these trends and reinforced the need for more cooperation. The European Parliament has helped shape the EU's security policy, always insisting on the need to uphold fundamental rights, equality and the rule of law.

Strengthening the EU's internal security

Strengthening Europol's mandate

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cirlig, EPRS, June 2021

This 'EU legislation in progress' briefing considers the Commission's proposal for a strengthened mandate for Europol, the EU's law enforcement cooperation agency. The proposal's main objectives are to enhance Europol's cooperation with private parties, allow the agency to process large and complex datasets and provide a role for Europol in research and innovation in the field of law enforcement. The European Parliament and the Council, as co-legislators, have begun their discussions on the initiative.

Understanding EU action against human trafficking

Briefing by Piotr Bakowski and Sofija Voronova, EPRS, May 2021

In April 2021, the European Commission presented a new strategy to combat trafficking in human beings, a decade on from the adoption of the EU's Anti-trafficking Directive. This EPRS briefing explores the reality of human trafficking – its prevalence, root causes, and persistent and emerging trends. It then looks at the EU's legal and policy frameworks for combating this constantly evolving form of crime.

Law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cirlig, EPRS, May 2021

This briefing discusses the provisions of Part Three of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK, regarding the continuity of security cooperation between EU and UK law enforcement and judicial authorities in criminal matters. The TCA, which had been provisionally applied since 1 January 2021, entered fully into force on 1 May 2021.

Understanding Eurojust: The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation

Briefing by Micaela Del Monte, EPRS, May 2021

Eurojust addresses serious cross-border crimes by coordinating and supporting cooperation between national judicial authorities. In 2019, a new regulation established Eurojust's governance, structure and competences, strengthened the agency's democratic oversight, and aligned its data protection regime with the EU legal framework on data protection.

Addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online

Briefing by Katrien Luyten, EPRS, April 2021

Dissemination of terrorist content is one of the most widespread and most dangerous forms of misuse of online services in the field of internal security. In September 2018, the Commission proposed a regulation preventing the dissemination of such content online by means of its removal within one hour of receipt of a removal order from competent authorities. The proposed legislation was adopted in spring 2021.

Electronic evidence in criminal matters

Briefing by Piotr Bakowski and Sofija Voronova, EPRS, March 2021

Interinstitutional negotiations are ongoing on proposed new rules that would allow law enforcement and judicial authorities to request directly (or secure temporarily) electronic data needed for investigating and prosecuting crime from service-providers operating in the EU, irrespective of where the data are stored. The new rules would also impose an obligation on service-providers to appoint a legal representative for the purpose of receiving and enforcing orders issued by competent authorities.

Anti-money-laundering package 2021

Briefing by Eckhard Binder, EPRS, March 2021

This briefing looks at the implementation, application and effectiveness of European anti-money-laundering legislation, ahead of a revision package that the Commission is expected to present this year. This package will include proposals to transfer parts of the existing anti-money-laundering directive to a regulation; to set up an EU-wide anti-money-laundering supervisory system, and to establish a coordination and support mechanism for Member States' financial intelligence units.

Policing in national parliaments: How parliaments organise their security

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cirlig, EPRS, February 2021

This briefing provides an overview of the structures responsible for maintaining security and order in and around the parliaments of 11 EU Member States, namely Belgium, Germany, Spain, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Finland, as well as three non-EU countries – Canada, the UK and the US.

European critical infrastructures: Revision of Directive 2008/114/EC

Briefing by Irmgard Anglmayer, EPRS, February 2021

Council Directive 2008/114/EC is part of the EU framework for critical infrastructure protection. While embracing an 'all-hazards approach', its scope is limited to the energy and transport sectors, which are widely considered to be lacking in this respect. Calls for the directive's scope to be broadened and for a focus on resilience rather than just protection resulted in the Commission presenting a new legislative proposal in December 2020.

Understanding EU counter-terrorism policy

Briefing by Sofija Voronova, EPRS, January 2021

Faced with a persistent international terrorist threat, the EU is playing an ever more ambitious role in counter-terrorism. This briefing sets out the current situation, as well as the EU's legal and policy framework for counter-terrorism. The EU provides cooperation, coordination and (to some extent) harmonisation tools, as well as financial support, to address this borderless phenomenon.

Understanding EU action against migrant smuggling

Briefing by Katrien Luyten with Stephanie Brenda Smialowski, EPRS, January 2021

Around 90 % of those who cross the EU's external borders illegally do so with the assistance of migrant smugglers. The facilitation of irregular migration is a high profit, low risk criminal activity. This briefing gives an overview of migrant smuggling trends, the smugglers' ways of operating and EU action to prevent and combat the phenomenon, as well as related crimes.

Understanding the EU response to organised crime

Briefing by Katrien Luyten with Sofija Voronova, EPRS, September 2020

A growing number of organised crime groups are active in the EU, often with a cross-border reach. EU Member States therefore rely increasingly on cross-border and EU-level cooperation to support their law enforcement authorities on the ground. The EU's legal and policy frameworks have evolved accordingly.
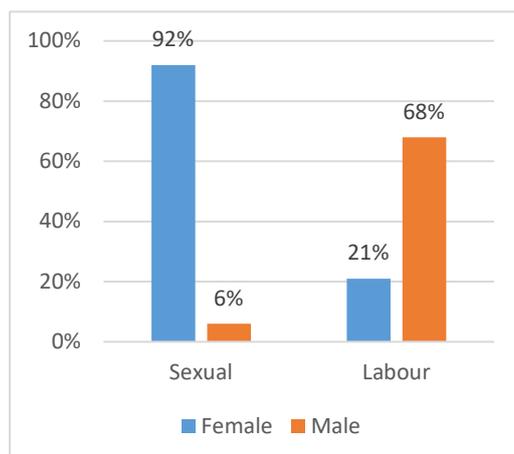
Coronavirus and prisons in the EU: Member States' measures to reduce the spread of the virus

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cirlig, Micaela Del Monte, Katrien Luyten and Sofija Voronova, EPRS, June 2020

This briefing looks into the various measures adopted by Member States between early March and the end of May 2020 in response to the challenges posed to the Union's prisons by the coronavirus crisis. Ensuring strict sanitary conditions, adequate health monitoring and the necessary distancing to prevent an outbreak in these closed environments has been a considerable challenge for most, if not all EU Member States.

EPRS graphics

Victims of human trafficking by gender and type of exploitation, EU 27, 2017-2018

Source: European Commission, 2020.

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